

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PANAMA 02893 231709Z
ACTION SS-25

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-----231711Z 097580 /43/10

R 222206Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1623

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 2893

STADIS////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 2)

FOR ASST. SECRETARY TODMAN FROM JORDEN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PN, US
SUBJECT: NEW PANAMANIAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON

REFS: (A) STATE 088568 (B) PANAMA 2845

1. I CALLED ON AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE GABRIEL LEWIS
TO PERSONALLY INFORM HIM OF AGREEMENT TO HIS APPOINTMENT.
HE RECEIVED NEWS WITH PLEASURE AND NOTED HE HAS BEGUN
MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR HANDLING OF HIS EXTENSIVE
BUSINESS INTERESTS IN HIS ABSENCE. HE HAS CONTROLLING
ROLE IN PAPER COMPANIES AS WIDELY SCATTERED AS ECUADOR,
GUATEMALA AND SURINAM-AS WELL AS APANAMA. REORGANIZATION
OF COMPANY MANAGEMENT AND BOOARDS OF DIRECTORS WILL RE-
QUIRE SOME LITTLE TIME. BUT HE SAID HE AND HIS WIFE
HOPE TO BE ABLE TO LEAVE FOR WASHINGTON IN ABOUT TWO
WEEKS.

2. LEWIS' ASSESSMENT OF HIS NEW ASSIGNMENT IS INTERESTING.
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FIRST, HE MADE CLEAR HE INTENDS TO BE AN AMBASSADOR NOT
A NEGOTIATOR. CONFIDENTIALLY HE BELIEVES HIS PREDECESSOR
DID NOT CARRY OUT MANY OF THE IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS OF THE
JOB AND HE INTENDS TO AVOID PAST ERRORS.

3. BEYOND SEEING THAT THE ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF HIS
EMBASSY ARE CARRIED OUT, LEWIS SEES HIS JOB AS BEING

THREE-FOLD: A) DEALING WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT; B) DEALING WITH THE CONGRESS--MAKING FRIENDS AND PROMOTING PANAMA'S CAUSE AS WELL AS COUNTERING CRITICISMS; C) DEALING WITH THE PRESS AND TRYING TO PROMOTE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PANAMA SITUATION. HE IS THINKING OF HAVING THREE ASSISTANTS TO HELP HIM WITH EACH OF THESE THREE FUNCTIONAL AREAS. AT THE SAME TIME, HE SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT TO BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN TREATY NEGOTIATIONS THOUGH HE WOULD, OF COURSE, HAVE TO BE AWARE OF ALL IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS ON THAT FRONT. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT HE WILL HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO GENERAL TORRIJOS WHEN AND AS NEEDED.

4. I THINK IT IS HEARTENING THAT THE NEW AMBASSADOR HAS SO WELL RECOGNIZED THE REAL NEEDS OF HIS COUNTRY'S EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON AND THAT HE PERCEIVES THE AREAS OF IMPORTANCE THAT HAVE HERETOFORE BEEN LARGELY NEGLECTED. I AM PERSUADED HE WILL DO AN EXCELLENT JOB AND THAT HE WILL BE A CONSIDERABLE ASSET IN ADVANCING OUR COMMON CAUSE. HE MAY EVEN BE ABLE TO MODERATE THE SOMETIMES EXTREME STAND OF HIS COLLEAGUE NADER PITY IN THE OAS*

5. THINK YOU WILL WISH TO SHARE ABOVE WITH SOME SELECTED COLLEAGUES--CERTAINLY AMBASSADOR BUNKER AND LINOWITZ. JORDEN

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